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# Major belonged to elite Army group

By Walter Andrews  
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Maj. Arthur D. Nicholson Jr., the U.S. officer killed Sunday by a Soviet bullet, was a member of the Army's elite, highly educated Foreign Area Officers group. FAOs specialize in a particular nation. The Soviet Union was the specialty of the 37-year-old major.

FAO members feel they are given more intensive training than counterpart groups in the Air Force and the Navy, from which most of the nation's military attaches and military assistance officers are chosen for duty overseas.

FAO training consists of a year of language studies at the Defense Language Institute in Monterey, Calif., another year or more of graduate study in the history,

officer tells what has happened. The FAO is supposed to be able to tell why it happened and its probable significance, the officer said.

The FAO is known as "an alternate specialty" taken up by officers in about the eighth year of their careers.

Col. McNab said a large number of FAOs have combat arms — infantry, armor and artillery — as their primary military occupational specialties and only a small number have military intelligence.

Maj. Nicholson's primary specialty was military intelligence and his alternate specialty was foreign area officer, the spokesman said.

He declined to give the specific number of FAOs on duty worldwide but said they number "in the thousands."

politics, economy and sociology of a nation and an overseas training assignment.

Maj. Nicholson had completed his training and since February 1982 had been on his first operational assignment with the U.S. military liaison group in Potsdam near Berlin, East Germany. The 14-man liaison group serves as the point of contact with the Soviet army in East Germany.

An Army spokesman, Lt. Col. Craig McNab, said that the FAO puts more emphasis on graduate studies — getting to know the country — than on language training.

An officer familiar with the group, who spoke on the grounds he not be identified, said FAOs take up where intelligence officers leave off.



Maj. Arthur D. Nicholson Jr.

AP